

# Delphi FFA members pulled out all stops for tractor restoration project

Comet staff report



Delphi FFA's restored 1945 John Deere 'B' Photo provided *Delphi Community High School FFA* recently donated a completely restored 1945 John Deere "B" for inclusion in the John Deere Museum in Moline, Ill. The presentation was made at the FFA National Convention held Oct. 24-27 in Indianapolis. The following narrative about the Delphi FFA restoration of the "B" was written by Delphi Community School Corporation's High School Agriculture teacher Doug Walker.

The tractor is a 1945 "B." It was built on July 23, 1945, and was shipped the next day through the Minnesota John Deere branch. It was sold at a dealership in Clayton, Wisc. The tractor eventually ended up in Indiana, where it was purchased and donated to the Delphi Community High School FFA by the Goingglobal.org group, headed up by Dan Kerkhoff.



Delphi FFA students began assessing the tractor in May of this year, making a list of needs and wants for presentation at the National FFA Convention. Parts were gathered throughout the summer. A significant amount of help came from New Paris Tractor (Richard Brown) and K&K Antique Tractor in Shelbyville. The disassembly started the first week of August. The tractor ran well and was in parade ready shape, but not in John Deere Museum condition.

Here is how the John Deere B looked last June.

Originally thinking it was a fairly simple restore and paint project, it soon turned into a scramble as the restoration did not go as planned. There were many unforeseen hurdles along the way, starting with the fact that the tractor is a war-year tractor, as well as a switchover year for the "B." Parts were a challenge to find. Titan

Tire was contacted about FFA tires, but Titan suspended the program. Firestone was then contacted. They made a special set of tires, just for this tractor and donated them!

Paint also became an issue with the heat and humidity in August and September. Some parts were redone multiple times to get the paint right, which included painting the nose cone up to nine times.

The final assembly of sheet metal took place Oct. 19 with delivery on Oct. 22. However, that night the motor sprung a leak in the head and dropped three gallons of antifreeze in the crankcase.

The motor was then disassembled, parts were located and over a thousand miles were driven to retrieve them. The engine was rebuilt over the weekend.

The other half of the story is that a family member of mine was in a very serious semi accident. I ran to the trauma unit in Indianapolis because the FFA students said “don’t worry, we got this.” They took the restoration responsibility and finished with little guidance.

With issues like a leaky head gasket, fixed by fishing line, which is an old time JD mechanic’s trick, the project was finished at 9 p.m. on Oct. 21.

When we started the engine, we realized the magneto case was cracked and would need replaced. Try finding a Wiko X at 11 p.m. on a Sunday night! A student ran to K&K in Shelbyville at 6 a.m., not knowing for sure if they even had one (luckily they had just one!). The student met the tractor on the enclosed trailer half-way to the convention in Indianapolis.



**SPIT AND POLISHED!** Extra hardener in the paint plus waxing and polishing helped this John Deere B tractor shine in the lights of Bankers Life Fieldhouse in Indianapolis.

The magneto worked and we delivered the tractor only an hour behind schedule.

The first time the tractor was driven after we finished the restoration project was inside Bankers Life Fieldhouse, when it was delivered to National FFA.

The students worked diligently and never got discouraged. They were very proud of their work! As a 27-year ag teacher, FFA members never cease to amaze me with what they are capable of when the pressure is on!

A huge thank-you goes out to everyone who helped in the process. We had a lot of help and support from FFA members, former members, community members and parents. The only regret from a student was that “not many Delphi people got to see it after it was finished, other than in pictures,” but they were able to see it on TV and several of our community people recorded it!